SYNOPSIS

For

Ph.D in Philosophy

Title: "TheNyāyaConcept of Self(*ātmā*): A Critical Study"

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SYNOPSIS

1. Title of my research topic:

"The Nyāya Concept of Self (*ātmā*): A Critical Study."

2. Statement of the problem:

Self (*ātmā*) is the most important subject of discussion in Indian Metaphysics. It is very often argued that Indian philosophy is mainly spiritual since the discussion aims at achieving the liberation of the self which is the highest goal of life. All most all the schools of Indian philosophy except Cārvākas accept *mokṣa*[1] is the highest good to achieve. But the way of getting *mokṣa*, the nature of mokṣa and finally the nature of the agent who achieves *mokṣa* varies from school to school. Therefore, the nature of self becomes the center point of discussion.

I have chosen "The Nyāya Concept of Self(*ātmā*): A Critical Study" as the title of my research area. Now the question can arise 'why'? Almost all the *mokṣavādi* and *ādhyātmavādi*, among the Indian philosophers, explained self in the context of the religious and spiritual point of views. There are various positive and negative views regarding the discussion on Indian philosophy. Rajendra Prasad in his book "*Karma, Causation and Retributive Morality*" claims that *mokṣa* is a subject-matter of religion. *Mokṣa,* as a *puruṣārtha* is neither consistent nor logical[2]. But, the Naiyāyika have developed logic as the base of their metaphysical claims.

3. **The concept of self in Indian tradition**:

Various school of Indian philosophies discuss self (*ātmā*) on their own point of view. Most of the Indian philosophical schools, except Cārvāka and Bauddha, explain the character of self as eternal, permanent, unchanging, full of joy, full of pleaser and conscious being. According to Indian tradition, a self is one of the being which is present in every living body. According to Cārvāka school, a self is not more than the conscious body. They believe that the body is composed of four elements like earth, water, fire and air. According to Cārvāka, there is no

[1]*Moksha*, vimukti and mukti, is a term in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism which refers to various forms liberation.
[2]Rajendra Prasad, Karma, Causation and Retributive Morality , ICPR, 1989, pp 310-311.

such thing as *ātmā.* Consciousness is a peculiar quality of the living body. Therefore, the ātmā or self-has pervaded only the physical body with a new emerging quality.

Buddha school has admitted that there is no permanent self. They believe in *anātmāvāda* or the theory of the non-existent of the self. There are two views regarding self in Buddha school, viz. *anātmāvāda* (negative view) and *saṁghātavāda* (positive view). *Anātmāvāda* is a Buddhist theory on self which is denied the existent of a permanent self and they accept the impermanent self. On the other hand, Buddhists hold that the self is a combination of *paňcha-skandhas*. This combination of five changing elements viz. *rupa*, *vedanā*, *saṁjňā*, *saṁskāra* and *vijňāna*, are called *saṁghātavāda*.

Jaina school has admitted *jīva* or self as an eternal entity. Self or *jīva* is a conscious substance. Consciousness is the essence of the self. Self is free from all the *karmas*. According to Jaina philosophy, the self is subsisting in the whole body. They also believe two selves can present in one body as like the two candles can light to a room at the same time.

Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophy has admitted self as a substance. The substance is the substratum of qualities. There are some qualities which are subsisted in self (*ātmā*) and one of the qualities is knowledge (*jňāna*). Annnaṁbhaṭṭa in his book *Tarkasaṁgraha* has given the definition of self as "*jṇānadhikaraṇamātmā*" i.e the substrate (*adhikaraṇa*) of consciousness. Self (*ātmā*) is of two kinds, *jivātmā* and *paramātmā*. *Jivātmā* is the substratum of impermanent knowledge and the *paramātmā* is the substratum of eternal knowledge. Self is ubiquitous[3].

According to Sāṁkhya system of Indian Philosophy, *puruṣa* or self is different from body, sense, mind, intellect and *ahaṁkār*. *Ātmā* or *puruṣa* is pure conscious and manifest in itself. *Puruṣa* has no qualities. Self is eternal, pure, free and bindles.Īśwarakriṣna in his *Sāṁkhya-kārikā* has given the arguments in favour of the existence of *puruṣa* in the *Kārikā*-17, and in the next *kārikā*, he has given the arguments in favour of a plurality of *puruṣa*. Also, *Puruṣa* exists in every living body[4].

The Mīmāṁsā school has admitted self is an eternal, infinite substance. They believe consciousness is not the essence of the self. In dreamless sleep and in the state of

[3] Narayana Chandra Gowsami,*Tarkasaṁgraha* by Annaṁbhaṭṭa ,Sanskrita Pustak Bhandar, pp,174-175.

[4]Rajat Bhattacharjyya, Samkhya karika and Samkhya tattva kaumudi, Progressive publishers,2011,p,24.

liberation[5]the self-has no consciousness, because their conditions, such as there are individuals. The Bhāṭṭa school hold that the self is not knower whenever any object is known: it is known occasionally. When we reflect on the self, we know it as the object of self-consciousness (*ahaṁvṛtti*). But the Prābhākara school objects to this view on the grounds that the very conception of self-consciousness is untenable because the self cannot be both subject and object of "the same act of knowledge any more than food can be both the cook and the cooked. The function of the subject and object are mutually incompatible (*karma -kartā-virodha*) and cannot be attributed to the same thing at the same time"[6].

Vedānta school accepts self as eternal. According to Advaita Vedānta, *Brahman* is real, the world is unreal and, the *Brahman* and the *jīva* are same. Actually, we do not differ from *Brahman*. *Sat-cit-ānanda* (real-conscious-pleasure) is the real nature of the *Brahman*. But, due to ignorance, we forget our real nature. Vedānta school believes in three types of*kāl* viz.*vyāvahārika, prātivāsika* and *pārmārthika*. We achieve the highest good or *Brahman* at the stage of *pārmārthika-kāl*.

4.**Research questions and Hypothesis**:

Can the Cārvāka view of *dehātmāvāda* explain the transmission of experience (*anubhava*) of the body possessed at childhood and the recollection of the same experience at the changing body at old age? On the same logic, the Buddhist fails to explain the transmission of experience by the flow of momentary[7].

Sāṁkhya philosophers distinguish between *buddhi*, *upalabdhi* and *jňāna*. The main evolution of *prakṛti* is *buddhi*, which is known as *antaḥkaraṇa*, and it is material in nature. Knowledge is the evolution of *buddhi*, therefore *jňāna* is not the quality of the conscious self. Self (*puruṣa*) is unchanging, pure conscious and eternal. But when the self-reflected on *buddhi* at that time make an unreal relation and this is called *upalabdhi*. According to Sāṁkhya,*upalabdhi* is the cause of memory. Sāṁkhya admits *prakṛti* as material. So, the cause of *prakṛti*is also material. According to them, *buddhi* which is unconscious in nature is the *kartā* and *purusa* which is pure consciousness is the *bhoktā*. They also believe in the law

[5]Subodh Kapoor,The System of Indian Philosophy, Cosmo Publication,2004,p,363.
[6] Subodh Kapoor ,Encyclopaedia of Vaidic Philosophy,Cosmo publication 2002, p 2053.
[7]Bhattacharya,Srishyamapada.*Nyāyakusumāňjali*-Udayanacharya,Sanaskritapustaka Bhandar, pp. 103-116

of *karma*. As *kartā* and *bhoktā* do not belong to the same locus (*ekādhikaraṇavṛtti*), how can the *karma* of *buddhi* lead to the liberation of the Self or *puruṣa*?[8]

Again, the Buddhist vehemently criticized the Vedāntins concept of self. According to them, we do not experience the consciousness as such rather we experience intended consciousness (*viṣayamukhitā*). So, the Vedāntins concept of self is primarily based on *Śabda-pramāṇa*. But S. N. Dasgupta holds that the belief in *śāstra* is a dogma. It is almost a criminal procedure. Is it possible to prove the Vedāntins pure conscious Self, without the half of *Śabda-pramāṇa*?

Although, the Naiyāyikas claim themselves a reason based philosophy but the criteria they put for logic is not beyond question. According to them, *sutarka* is that which does not exceed the limit of *śāstra* and *pratyakṣa*. Hence, the criticisms of both the Nyāya and Vedāntins belong to the same platform. Is it possible to come out from the vicious circle of *śāstra* logic?

According to Rega, Indian philosophy gives the impression of moving in a closed circle. The discussion, no doubt are free, but all the *pūrva-pakṣas* are given. The arguments which can be advanced in their support a far defending then against possible attacks one well known. The new arguments are very much likely to be a variation on an old argument. They could only produce improvements in style, not in substance. One of the objectives of the proposed thesis would be to present some independent argument keeping in view the criticisms laid down Dharmaraja Adhvarindra[9], Nārāyan Bhaṭṭa[10].

According to S.N. Dasgupta, The theory of rebirth, the theory of *karma* and the theory of *mukti* may thus be regarded as the three most important dogmas through which "Indian Philosophy has been made subservient to ethics and religion"[11]. Can Indian Philosophy overcome these dogmas?

[8]Bhattacharya, Srishyamapada, *Nyāyakusumāñjali*- Udayanacharya,Sanaskrita Pustaka Bhandar, pp. 96-95
[9] Dharmaraja Adhvarindra, *Vedānta-Paribhāṣā.*
[10]Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa, *Mānameyodaya*
[11]Philosophical Essays, S.N.Dusgupta,The University of Calcutta, 1941, pp. 227-228.

According to J.N. Mohanty, "The western mind lays great stress on sciences, logic and humanism"[12]. For the Hindus, a system of philosophy is an insight, a *darśana*. It is the vision of truth and not a matter of logical argument and proof. How far Mohanty's claim is valid for the concept of self?

[12] Debates in Indian Philosophy: Classical, Colonial, and Contemporary , A. Raghuramaraju, Oxford University Press,2006

5. Chapterisation:

1. Chapter –I: Introduction
2. Chapter –II: Concept of Self in Cārvāka and Bauddha philosophy.
3. Chapter –III: Concept of Self in Sāṁkhya and Yoga philosophy.
4. Chapter –IV: Concept of Self in Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṁsā philosophy.
5. Chapter –V: Concept of Self in Advaita Vedānta philosophy.
6. Chapter- VI: Concept of Self in Nyāya-Vaiśaṣika philosophy
7. Chapter –VII: Conclusion.

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